

The Power's Out: What's safe to eat?

Whenever the power goes out, food safety may be a problem. Never take a chance with food that may be contaminated. Food-borne bacteria often cannot be detected by taste, smell, or appearance. Below are some guidelines, but always remember:

If in doubt—throw it out!

Frozen food

If the appliance door is closed tightly:

- Fully packed freezers will keep food properly cooled for 2 days
- Half-full freezers will keep food cooled for 1 day
- Foods that still contain ice crystals after the power comes back on are still partially frozen and can usually be refrozen.

Refrigerated food

Foods that should be thrown out after 2 hours at temperatures above 40 degrees F:

- Raw or cooked meat, poultry and seafood
- Milk and dairy products
- Cooked pasta and pasta salads
- Eggs

Foods that you may be able to keep at room temperature for a few days:

- Butter and margarine
- Dried fruits
- Opened jars of salad dressing, peanut butter, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup and olives
- Hard and processed cheese
- Bread, rolls, cakes and muffins

For more information

For answers to specific questions, call:

- Your local health department. In Dane County, call 242-6411. In Vernon County, call 608-647-3118.
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, 608-224-4700
- USDA Hotline at 1-800-535-4555